BEETLEJUICE™

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LYDIA'S SCREAM DATE

By B.J. Specter

BEETLEJUICE GOES *HAUNTING*

Mike Powers' bedroom curtains blew in with a sudden gust of wind.

Nothing strange about that.

Except for one thing.

The windows were tightly shut.

Mike shivered. He felt a funny tingle, as if something were racing through his body.

And then . . .

The captain of the football team began to . . . cackle.

He cackled like crazy.

He couldn't stop.

Yes, ghost fans. . .
Beetlejuice had taken over!

BOOKS BY B.J. SPECTER

Beetlejuice #1: Beetlejuice For President

Beetlejuice #2: Lydia's Scream Date

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LYDIA'S SCREAM DATE

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This book is dedicated to Shevek, Moondance and Sean O'Hara

This book is a work of fiction. Names, characters, places and incidents are either the product of the author's imagination or are used fictitiously. Any resemblance to actual events or locales or persons, living or dead, is entirely coincidental.

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CHAPTER ONE

QUEEN OF THE BALL

"OH, MY SWEET DARLINGS," crooned Miss Shannon. "I have a very exciting announcement!"

"Exciting?" thought Lydia. "At Miss Shannon's School for Girls? I doubt it!"

It was Monday afternoon. Lydia sat slumped in her seat in the very last row of the assembly hall. As usual, no one was sitting anywhere near her. She couldn't wait for the school day to end.

This was Lydia's first year at Miss Shannon's. This past summer, her father Charles had finally moved out of the city. That made him incredibly happy. It made Lydia miserable. Now Lydia, her dad, and her stepmother Delia all lived in a big old country house.

Their new home was in a tiny New England town called Peaceful Pines. Dullsville was more like it.

Except for one little thing.

Their house was haunted.

Lydia was the only one who knew it. But the Deetzes shared their house with an ugly, crazy ghost. His name was Beetlejuice. His "door" into the house was the mirror in her room. To let him in, all she had to do was say his name three times.

In the back row, Lydia grinned to herself. That Beetlejuice sure was a barrel of laughs.

Instantly, a barrel appeared at her feet! And something inside it was laughing!

She opened the lid. Inside sat Beetlejuice, cackling and guffawing. She could see all his crooked, rotting green teeth.

"Hi, Babes," he chuckled.

"Beetlejuice!" Lydia couldn't hide her delight. "What are you doing here?"

"It's a ghoul's school, ain't it?" he chortled. "Besides, what would this place be without school spirit?"

Lydia's smile broadened. But girls were turning their heads to look at her. "Listen. Not now," she whispered to the ghost.

"Huh?"

"Put a lid on it!"

Wham! The barrel's lid smacked back down and hit Lydia on the head.

"*Ow!*"

"Lydia," warned the headmistress from the stage. "Do you think you could keep it down back there?"

"Sorry, Miss Shannon." She put her head back down into the barrel. "Beat it, would ya?"

"Sure!" Beetlejuice beat the side of the barrel with his head. It boomed like a drum.

"We're all waiting," said Miss Shannon icily.

Just then, the barrel at her feet vanished into thin air. Lydia looked around nervously. Luckily, no one had noticed it.

"As I was saying," continued Miss Shannon, "I have a special announcement to make. I want to introduce the winners of the nomination for Queen of the Halloween Ball."

There was wild applause. Miss Shannon beamed.

"Hooray! Let's hear it for the old battle-ax!" roared a deep voice.

"What!" gasped Miss Shannon. She quivered with rage. "Who said that?"

Not a single girl raised her hand. But Lydia suddenly noticed a green-eyed battle-ax hanging on the far wall that hadn't been there a minute ago. Lydia covered her face with her hands.

"Please," she whispered, "please, Beetlejuice. Just go."

"Sure, Babes," a voice whispered back. "Happy to oblige."

When she looked up again, the battle-ax on the wall had disappeared.

"Well," said the headmistress. "One more interruption and you'll all have to stay late! Now, where was I? Oh, yes. As you know, the ball will be held a week from this Friday. And our brother school, Mr. Bannon's School for Boys, will supply the escorts."

More wild applause from the girls.

"The two girls with the most votes will now become the finalists for Queen," said Miss Shannon. She was clutching a tiny white envelope. She ripped it open. "And the nominees are . . ."

She paused to let the suspense build.

". . . Priscilla Westley! 999 votes!"

The applause was deafening. Priss stood up and began making her way to the podium. She waved at the crowd. She shook her silky blond hair and wrinkled her cute little nose. "Miss Perfect," thought Lydia, scowling.

Priss was captain of the school's cheerleading squad. She was a straight-A student, the most beautiful girl in the school and, of course, the most popular. She was ever so nice to everyone. Lydia hated her.

Not only was she perfect, she had the perfect boyfriend, Mike Powers from Mr. Bannon's School for Boys. Handsome Mike Powers. Captain of the football team.

Miss Shannon waved for quiet. "And the second nominee is . . . Lydia Deetz!"

There was a stunned silence. No one was as shocked as Lydia. She felt her heart sink right down into her sneakers.

"With one vote," Miss Shannon added.

There was no applause this time. Only catcalls. Hundreds of heads turned to stare at her. And then, the entire student body of Miss Shannon's began to jeer. It was like one giant snicker aimed right at Lydia.

"Please come up to the podium," instructed Miss Shannon.

Lydia got up. The hoots got louder. She bowed her head as she trudged up the aisle.

"What's that she's wearing?" called a voice.

"She's already dressed in her Halloween costume!" sneered another.

"She's dressed like a spider!"

"I hear she eats bugs for breakfast!"

The hissing grew even louder.

Lydia was wearing the school uniform—blazer, tie, dress,and black knee socks but she had added a

spider web of sparkling silver. She had been so proud of the decoration when she applied it that morning with her glitter-pen. Now, as she looked out over the sea of laughing faces, Lydia wished for once that she was wearing the same thing as everyone else.

"Students! Quiet! Please!" Miss Shannon sputtered into the microphone. "I won't dismiss you until I have quiet."

There was instant quiet.

"School dismissed," said the headmistress.

The chaos resumed instantly.

Keeping her head down, Lydia headed for the exit. A hand caught her arm. It was Priss.

"Isn't this just too wonderful?" she asked. She smiled that perfect smile. "Just think, in two weeks one of us will be crowned queen."

"I wonder which one?" mocked Lydia.

Priss laughed and tossed her hair. "Oh, by the way, I can tell you who voted for you. I did. It's okay, you don't have to thank me. I love doing nice things like that. You see, everyone in this school thinks you're so weird. And no one wants to be seen with you. Soooo . . . I thought it would just be the best thing for you if you could get nominated."

Lydia tried to think of a witty insult. "Thanks" was all she came up with. She walked out into the

hallway. It was crammed with students, laughing, yelling, and pushing each other. Probably all laughing at me, Lydia couldn't help thinking.

Lydia's locker was easy to find. She had painted it black, like a coffin. In bloody red letters she had added: "Keep Out! Rotting Corpse Inside!" At least this kept the other kids from monkeying with her stuff.

She spun the dial of her combination lock, and opened the door.

Zap!

A hand with long red nails flicked out, grabbed her by the scruff of the neck and pulled her right into the locker.

"Hi, Babes!"

"Beetlejuice!" Lydia gasped. "What are you—"

"I just wanted to be the first to say congratulations on your nomination!"

"My nomination? How do you know about that? I thought you left."

Beetlejuice smiled wickedly.

"You were there?!"

"Yup," he beamed proudly.

"Where?!"

"Sitting up on the basketball net. I hoop you don't mind!"

Beetlejuice cackled wildly. Luckily, the sound

was drowned out by the shouting of the other students in the hall.

"Don't worry," he added, "nobody noticed me. Except your headmistress. She just figured her eyes were going."

"Well, then you saw that I'm the new school joke."

"Nonsense! They're jealous. Just think," he said in a high fake woman's voice. "You'll be queen!" In a flash, a crown appeared on the ghost's forehead. His body changed into a woman's body. "And I'll be . . . ."

A black beard sprouted on his face. His voice lowered to a growl. " . . . King!"

"Forget it, Beetlejuice. I'm not going to that dance."

"Not going?!"

"You think I'd go to something so nerdy and normal and grody as a school dance? Not in a ghost's age. Besides, I don't even have a date. Why, I don't even know a guy I'd like to go wi—"

She didn't finish her sentence. Suddenly, she realized that she was not alone. Someone was standing right beside her. She looked up, startled.

And saw none other than . . .

. . . Kevin Flick.

One of the handsomest, coolest, and neatest guys in Mr. Bannon's School for Boys. He had wavy

brown hair. Twinkling blue eyes. Talk about awesome. Why, Kevin was the only boy in the history of Peaceful Pines who had ever broken up with Priss instead of the other way around.

"You always talk to your locker?" he asked her with a grin.

"Huh? Oh! No! Ha-ha! Only at the end of the day. I . . . er . . . like to tell it good-bye."

She glanced back inside her locker. Beetlejuice stuck out his striped tongue and crossed his eyes. Really crossed them. The left eye switched places with the right. Lydia slammed the door.

"OWWWWWW!!!!" came the howl from within.

Kevin stared at her, amazed.

"Sorry," she told Kevin with a shrug. "I got excited that school was over for the day!" To prove it, she howled a few more times.

Kevin eyed her strangely. Just then, her locker door began to bulge out. Beetlejuice was trying to escape! Lydia threw her whole body against the door. "I think I've got a little too much stuff in here," she explained, trying to lock it. That didn't explain why two arms were now reaching out of the locker toward her.

Luckily, someone had just called Kevin's name and he was looking the other way. She got Beetlejuice's arms back in the locker. Then the ghost

B

began to growl. Kevin looked back at her in shock.

"Pretty good dog imitation, huh?" boasted Lydia. "I also do coyotes. Yip! Yip! Yip!"

Finally she clicked the lock shut. "Hey!" exclaimed the ghost from inside.

"Hey, yourself," Kevin told her.

"Yeah, well, see ya." Lydia walked off casually. At least, she tried to. She thought she could feel Kevin's eyes watching her back. The truth was, she had never walked less casually in her entire life.

Kevin was watching her. But someone was watching Kevin, too. Two gleaming green eyes stared at him through the slats in Lydia's locker.

Kevin didn't turn around, though. Something else caught his eye.

It lay on the floor. It looked like a tiny skull. He bent down. It was a tiny skull! A tiny black skull with gleaming red eyes. He turned it over. It had a metal clasp. It was a barrette! Lydia's barrette.

Kevin picked it up. He looked at it closely. Then he smiled.

CHAPTER TWO

SLIMED!

"EVERYONE MADE FUN OF ME," Lydia told Gladys. As if in response, Gladys waved one hairy black leg.

Lydia was alone in her room.

Well, almost alone. She was playing with Gladys, her deadly pet tarantula.

Just then, Beetlejuice popped up in the mirror.

"Hey, Babe! I would have come sooner, but I was locked in a debate." He cackled.

"Not now, Beetlejuice."

"Not now?!!" The ghost frowned. Then he grinned wickedly. "I've got it! Let's go to the Mondo Mall and make it rain toads."

"I'm busy."

"Bzzzy? Ouch! So am I!" A whole hive of bees now buzzed out of his nostrils. They stung him all over till he gobbled them up.

"What happened to you?" he asked Lydia, when she didn't laugh at his antics.

"Assembly happened," Lydia said gloomily. "I'm feeling a little down in the dumps."

"Great! I love being down in the dumps." In the mirror, he now sat atop a garbage dump. He picked up a rotting banana peel. It was swarming with flies and squirming with worms. His eyes spun with excitement. "How does this appeal to you?" He swallowed his treat, flies, worms, and all.

"That's not what I want," Lydia told him.

"No? Then what?"

Lydia was surprised by her own answer. "I guess I want . . . I want Kevin Flick to ask me out!"

Beetlejuice looked horrified. "Ask you out? I'll ask you out. GET OUT!" he yelled.

She looked down.

"Lyds," he went on. "What's the matter with you? You've never cared about any of these boring Peaceful Pines guys before. And why should you . . . when you've got me."

He puffed up his muscles.

Lydia didn't even smile. "I know, but . . ."

"But what? Hey!" His eyes narrowed to the size of tiny dots. "Who's Kevin Flick?"

"The boy outside my locker today. The guy you helped me make a fool of myself in front of."

"Him?" The ghost burped, belched, snorted, and wheezed. "Yech! He's so good-looking!"

"That's right. And I want him to ask me to the Halloween Ball. I mean, he's my dream date."

"So? I'm your scream date." Beetlejuice shrieked at the top of his lungs. "See?"

Something tickled Lydia's arm. She looked down. Gladys was climbing aboard.

"I want to go with Kevin," she insisted.

"What are you talking about?" Beetlejuice said. "Before this, you said you didn't even want to go to the dance."

"I know. But now I do."

Gladys was crawling slowly upwards.

"It will never happen," Lydia added sadly. "Why should he ask me? I'm too weird."

"I'll ask you! I'll ask you!" shouted Beetlejuice, jumping up and down in the mirror. "Just let me into the room!"

"Weird. That's what everyone always calls me. Lydia the weirdo. Even my own stepmother thinks I'm kind of strange."

Gladys was on her shoulder now. Lydia pictured herself at assembly again. She heard the snickers, and sighed. Then an idea struck her.

"I've got it!" she exclaimed.

The spider was crawling up over her chin. It

moved across her mouth, and perched on her nose. Lydia had to go cross-eyed to look her in the eye.

"Gladys," she said. "It's time for me to become . . . NORMAL!!!!"

In the mirror, Beetlejuice clutched his throat with both hands. He began to choke. Out of his mouth poured a stream of snakes, insects, dustballs, fire, and smoke. When he recovered, he said, "Please don't say that word again. It drives me crazy."

"Normal," Lydia said firmly.

Beetlejuice was immediately tied up in a white strait jacket and flung into an insane asylum. When he reappeared, he started to laugh. "Normal? Who are you kidding? Look at you. You're talking to your pet tarantula!"

"Right." Lydia gently lifted Gladys off her nose and put her back in her cage. "Beetlejuice, I can't hang around with you anymore."

"Huh?! Why the ghoul not?"

"Because normal girls don't play with ghosts!"

"Okay. How about if I act normal, too?"

"Not a ghost of a chance." Lydia turned the mirror to face the wall.

"Hey! You can't do this to me! Lyds, it's me! Your old pal Beetlejuice. Let me in! C'mon! Lyds!"

Lydia ignored him. She looked around her room. Making it look normal would be close to impossible.

Spider webs clung to the rafters. Stuffed vampire bats hung from the ceiling. Animal skeletons perched on the furniture. Horror movie posters covered the walls. The lamps were sculptures of bloody monster heads. The phone was shaped like a lizard.

Her eye fell on the skull headboard above her bed. Well, she had to start somewhere. She dropped to her knees and poked around under her bed. She pulled out the bright pink dust ruffle her stepmother had tried to put around the bed. She hung it over the headboard. It hid the skull nicely.

There was a light tap at the door and Delia entered the room. "Lydia," her stepmother began, "I know you hate it when I buy you clothes. But I was in the city today, and I found this gorgeous Calvin Swine . . . ."

Delia was holding up a fuzzy white sweater. She struck a few poses with it.

"Don't tell me," Delia went on. "You despise it. But everyone is wearing Calvin Swine these days. It's to die for!"

Lydia took the sweater and held it against herself. She had to admit it. The sweater looked normal. "I love it!" she said.

Delia's mouth dropped open. She used her hand to close it. "What's that you said?"

"I said I love it!"

Delia's mouth dropped open again.

"Don't look so shocked, Mom. I don't always act like a weirdo."

Delia's gaze moved over to the bed. She saw the pink dust ruffle. Her mouth dropped open for a third time.

"Oh, by the way," Lydia continued. "I've changed my mind about the Halloween Dance. I'm going to go after all."

"Charles!" yelled Delia. *"Could you come here just for a minute, dear?"*

Delia was staring at Lydia with a frozen smile. Then her husband appeared. He stuck his pudgy face into the room and smiled. "What's the trouble?"

Delia turned back to Lydia. "Repeat what you just said."

"I've changed my mind about the Halloween Dance. I'm going!"

Charles's mouth dropped open. Delia closed it for him. An ear-to-ear grin spread across his face. "That's wonderful, dear!"

The Deetzes began skipping around Lydia. They chanted, "She's going to the dance! She's going to the dance!"

Lydia covered her face with her hands.

"Let's see, you'll need a dress," said Delia. "Something flashy. Maybe something by Armoony!"

"I thought it was a costume party," said Charles, scratching his head in confusion.

"Even better!" said Delia. "She can go as a fashion model!"

"Oh, I wish we could be there to see her," said Charles.

Suddenly, Delia's eyes flashed. "Great thinking, Charles!"

"Thanks!" He beamed. "Uh, what exactly did I say?"

"That we'll volunteer to be chaperones at the dance!"

"Oh, I mean, absolutely."

And with that her parents rushed from the room.

Lydia shut her door with a groan. Just then, Beetlejuice started shouting again from the other side of the mirror. He begged to be let in the room. Lydia tried to ignore him. He kept shouting. And when he stopped shouting, he started singing. "Someone's in the kitchen with Dinah!"

Lydia covered her ears. But he only sang louder. *"Someone's in the kitchen I knowwwww!"*

"Beetlejuice, stop it! You know I hate that song!"

"Someone's in the kitchen with Dinahhhhh! Strummin' on the old—"

"BEETLEJUICE! BEETLEJUICE! BEETLEJUICE!" Lydia shrieked.

That was the password. Instantly, Beetlejuice appeared on the bed. He crossed the legs of his

black-and-white striped pants. He looked relieved. "Whew! You had me scared there for a sec. What's gotten into you?"

"I'm tired of being a nut, that's what."

"Why? Nuts crack me up!"

Ignoring him, Lydia stood on her desk chair. Above the desk hung her poster from the vampire movie, *Fangs Alot!* She started to rip it down.

"Hey! What are you doing? I love that movie."

"I already told you what I'm doing. This is my room, not yours."

"Touchy, touchy!" Beetlejuice's hands flew around the room, touching everything in sight.

"I am touchy. And I'm asking you nicely to leave me alone."

"Leave you alone? You know, I don't think there is a nice way to ask that. Ow! That hurts."

A silver-handled dagger suddenly stuck out of his chest. Beetlejuice groaned and moaned as he struggled to pull it out. Lydia tried to ignore him. She pulled down a stuffed bat and threw it into her closet. "I mean," she said, "what if Kevin Flick were to walk in here? Not that he ever would. But what if he did? What would he think?"

A delighted leer spread across the spirit's face. "So, you want to impress Kevin! Why didn't you say so? Consider it done!"

Beetlejuice grinned and snapped his fingers.

"No, Beetlejuice!"

But she was too late. She stared around the room in horror. He had slimed it. The whole room was now dripping with crud and goo. It was crawling with insects and slithering with snakes. Beetlejuice whooped with delight. "Neat, huh? That ought to make his eyes bug out!"

In despair, Lydia leaned her head against the one dry spot left in the room: the window.

She didn't lean her head there for long, though, because just then, Lydia spotted someone riding his bike up the hill towards her house.

He looked very familiar. Could it be? Oh no, it really was . . .

Kevin Flick.

CHAPTER THREE

PEPE'S STRANGE ASSISTANT

"BEETLEJUICE!" cried Lydia, whirling around.

"AYYYYYY!" yelled the ghost. His yellow hair stood on end. His green eyes bulged. "Don't scare me like that!"

"We've got to go to the Neitherworld this instant!"

"The Neitherworld? Why?"

"Why? Why?" Lydia needed an excuse. She glanced at Gladys in her cage. She thought of Beetlejuice's own spider—Ginger, the tap-dancer.

"The Monster Across the Street is gobbling up Ginger!" she cried.

In a flash, Beetlejuice was off to Ginger's rescue. Lydia popped through the mirror and raced after him. She ran down the flight of rickety rotten steps into the Neitherworld.

She ran so fast she slipped. Then she crashed into Beetlejuice. He slipped. They both flew the rest of the way to the Neitherworld.

Lydia landed on top of Beetlejuice with a smash. When the stars finally stopped circling her head, she looked around for the ghost.

There was Beetlejuice's tacky shack, the Roadhouse, a few steps away. A neon sign flashed, "FRESH WORMS FOR SALE—MOIST AND TASTY." Plastered against the sign, like a pancake, was Beetlejuice.

"Beetlejuice! Are you okay?"

She pried him off the sign. There was a horrible sucking sound as Beetlejuice struggled back into shape. "Ouch," he said finally.

Then he raced towards the front door. He was yelling, "Ginger! Ginger!" The door wouldn't budge. He banged on the skull-and-crossbones knocker with all his might. *Knock! Knock!*

The knocker answered, "Knock knock. Who's there? Freda! Freda who? Freda can't let you in!"

Beetlejuice kicked the door down and raced inside. His pet vulture, waiting by the door, plucked off the ghost's jacket as he zoomed by.

Lydia ran after Beetlejuice. Kevin was probably already at the house! There was no time to lose!

Inside the Roadhouse, Ginger was doing a big production number with top hat and cane.

"Welcome . . . tap-tap . . . home . . . tap-tap-tap!" sang the spider.

"She's fine," said Beetlejuice as he skidded to a stop in front of the spider. Then he eyed Lydia suspiciously. "Hey! How would you have known she was in trouble, anyway?"

"Just a hunch," said Lydia. "Glad I was wrong. Say, I've got a game," she added breathlessly.

"A game?!"

"Yup. And what a jelly old game it is! I bet you can't squeeze your entire body into a jar of Squelch's grape jelly."

"You're on!" Beetlejuice roared. A jar of Squelch jelly appeared in his hand. He slurped down the contents in one long gulp. Then he squeezed himself inside the jar. Lydia quickly screwed on the lid.

Beetlejuice's tiny pale face pressed against the glass. He shouted, "Hey! Don't leave me in a jam!"

But Lydia was already running out the door. "Bye, Beetlejuice!" she called back. "Bye, Ginger."

"*See ya*—tap,tap—*later*—tap,tap-tap!" tapped Ginger.

Lydia raced back up the stairs to the real world as fast she could. Back in her own room, she rushed to the window. She could see the top of Kevin's brown-haired head down below. He was knocking at the front door!

Lydia raced out in the hall. On the shelf of the hall closet was a mini-vacuum cleaner. It was the newest model, the kind that sucked up liquids. She yanked on the handle. A tennis racket fell and bonked her on the head, followed by a croquet mallet and a bowling ball. Downstairs, she could hear Kevin asking her mom if Lydia was home.

Lydia ran into her room with the vacuum cleaner. VROOMMMM!!! She began vacuuming like a maniac. But the machine got stuck in the goop on the wall. She pulled with all her might and flew backwards across the room. She splattered into the slime on the other wall.

Kevin followed Mrs. Deetz up the stairs.

"Her room is right this way," Delia told him. "She decorated it herself. I'm afraid it's a little unusual."

Behind her closed door, Lydia was frantically throwing her collection of stuffed rats and bats into her underwear drawer.

The knock now came at her door.

"Hold on!" she called. She ripped down the last horror poster and dropped it behind a chair. She took a last quick look around. Unbelievable. The room looked normal!

"Now I know the secret to being normal," she told herself. "I'm staying away from Beetlejuice, Beetlejuice, Beetlejuice!"

SPLAAAAAAAAAAAATTTTTTTTTTTTTT!!!!

Bits of grape jelly flew everywhere as the ghost exploded out of the mirror.

"GOTCHA!" he cried.

He reached for her with hands dripping with purple jam.

Her door started to open.

She flicked on the mini-vacuum cleaner. "AAAAAAHHHHHHHHHH!" cried the ghost as she sucked him right into the machine!

She smoothed back her black bangs. "Come in," she said demurely.

"Lydia," Delia said. "You have a visitor." Delia's eyes sparkled like two diamond engagement rings.

Then she saw the room. Her jaw dropped all over again.

"Hi," Kevin said to Lydia with a smile. He was carrying his bicycle helmet under one arm.

"Hi," said Lydia.

Delia was still staring at the room in wonder.

"Mom?" Lydia said.

"What? Oh! Yes!" Her stepmother tiptoed out of the room.

Kevin smiled at Lydia. Those perfect blue eyes!

"You dropped this," he explained, opening his hand. Resting on his palm was the black skull barrette with the gleaming red eyes.

"I meant to," Lydia told him. She picked it up out

of his hand and dropped it again, this time into the trash basket.

There was a long pause as they stared at each other. Lydia felt faint.

"By the way, I think you're ugly," the vacuum cleaner said in a high voice.

"What?" Kevin asked.

"I said," said Lydia, "that I think you're awfully . . . nice to bring me my barrette."

"Oh."

"Now," said the vacuum cleaner, "make like a tree and leave."

"Huh?" asked Kevin, really confused.

"I said," said Lydia, "the leaves are pretty this time of year, don't you think?" She turned the vacuum cleaner on high. The machine seemed to squeal.

"Well," Kevin said with a grin. "See ya around."

"Yeah . . . thanks . . ."

And then he was gone. Lydia closed the door. She leaned her back against it. She pinched herself. Kevin was really here. In her room!

"Gee, this is great," said the machine in her hand. "I'm having a dust ball!"

"Good morning, dear," sang Delia from the stove. Then she turned and looked at her stepdaughter. Lydia smiled primly.

Lydia was wearing a white blouse that Delia had bought for her ages ago at Blandy's Bland Clothes. Over that she wore a neon green sweater. She'd brushed her black hair straight.

Delia fainted dead away on the kitchen floor. Charles began slapping her cheek, trying to make her wake up. "But I thought she burnt all the clothes I give her," muttered Delia as she came to.

That morning, Lydia's first class was English. She had to hand in a book report. Mr. Tweedle, her teacher, glanced down at her paper. Then he looked back up. Lydia smiled primly. Mr. Tweedle fainted dead away.

"It's not written in blood!" he mumbled as his students tried to revive him. "It's not written in invisible ink! It's not about monsters! It's about Heidi! Heidi!"

On Tuesday, Lydia had biology class with Mr. Dum. Mr. Dum gave a lecture on how blood-sucking leeches draw blood.

"Gross!" cried Lydia from the front row. She covered her eyes. "Oh, please, Mr. Dum, don't say another word about those awful, awful creatures. I'm a girl. I'm just too, too scared!"

Mr. Dum dropped his pointer and fainted dead away.

When he came to, he was talking to himself. "What about the time she brought a boa constrictor

to class? It ate Herbert, my pet hamster. What about that?"

"I guess," Lydia consoled herself, "it's going to take a little time for people to get used to me being normal!"

On Wednesday morning, Lydia took her bug collection out to the woods and set all the bugs free. "Good-bye, Gladys," she said sadly. "Good-bye, everyone." All the bugs scurried away.

At school during lunch, Lydia usually ate alone. Today, though, she tried to sit with the popular kids. They moved away.

Lydia usually brought her lunch in an air-motion sickness bag she once got on an airplane. She was known for bringing bizarre foods such as snail sandwiches. Today she bought the school's meatloaf special. She sniffed it. Then *she* fainted dead away.

Lydia didn't give up. Each day, she asked herself, "What would a normal schoolgirl do?" After school on Friday, she knew exactly what to do. She went to the Mondo Mall.

She strolled into the local hangout, Pepe's Pizza. Priss and her girlfriends sat at the center table. There was Amanda Olsen. And Jill White. And Stacey Robbins. The girls were giggling up a storm. At least until they saw Lydia. Then they fell silent and they stared at her.

Trying to ignore them, Lydia walked up to the counter.

"Hi, Pepe. Give me a Diet Coke and a plain slice."

"With fried ants?" asked Pepe.

"No. Plain."

"With fish eggs and frog legs?"

"Plain."

"With black bean sauce, green mustard, and cat's hair?"

"Plain!" insisted Lydia.

"Plain?" mused Pepe, stroking his mustache. Then he fainted dead away.

Pepe's new assistant, a tall, shaggy-haired man, handed Lydia her slice. Then he went to work trying to revive his boss.

Lydia sat at a table all by herself. She ate neatly, wiping her mouth daintily with a napkin. Everyone at Priss's table was still staring at her. Lydia smiled sweetly and waved.

"Listen," Priss said, sidling over to her table. "I know what you're up to. Acting like you're some normal kid. But it's not going to work. Everyone knows you're twisted. And no one's going to vote for you for queen."

Lydia swallowed a mouthful of gooey cheese. It burned the roof of her mouth. "Well," she said. "My date is going to ask me out any day now."

Priss laughed. "Who have you got in mind?

Marty Snodgrass? Ernest Cruckstink? Billy Plumbottom?"

She had named the three nerdiest kids in school. Priss herself was going with her boyfriend Mike Powers. Mike the handsome superjock hunk. Lydia touched the napkin to her mouth. "Actually, it's Kevin Flick."

Priss burst out laughing. Then she spun on her heels and headed back to her table. She whispered something and pointed at Lydia. The girls all giggled.

Just then, Kevin himself walked into the restaurant.

Lydia's heart began to pound.

"Pepe, you look pale," Kevin noted. He slapped the manager on the back. "You ought to take a day off." Pepe smiled weakly at Kevin as he said, "Give me a slice, would ya?"

He hadn't spotted Lydia yet. But Priss and her friends had seen him. That's for sure. They were watching the scene with broad, eager smiles.

"Oh, please," prayed Lydia, "let him ask me to the ball. Right now. Please let him ask me."

Just then, a mop slid under Lydia's legs. She looked up. It was Pepe's tall, shaggy-haired assistant.

"Hey!" she said. "Why don't you watch what you're doing?"

"Watch what I'm doing? I don't have time!" He ended with a high-pitched laugh.

Lydia looked at Kevin. Then her head jerked back to Pepe's assistant.

Something about that laugh sounded so familiar. Wasn't it,in fact, more of a . . . cackle?

She stared hard at the man with the mop. His long dark hair was hiding his face.

Kevin had just spotted her. He was grinning. He approached her table! Her dream was going to come true!

"Hi," he said. "Want some company?"

"Ooh, look at that greasy mess!" cried Pepe's assistant. He began mopping Lydia's pizza!

Lydia shrank back in horror. The assistant's hair had shifted slightly. She saw now that it was a wig.

And beneath the wig she could see a pale white face. And green buck teeth . . .

Lydia yelped. "Beetlejuice!"

CHAPTER FOUR

THE GREAT GARUMPH

"LYDIA!" Beetlejuice yelled back. He held out his arms for a hug.

Lydia didn't budge. She crossed her arms. She looked furious.

"Is there a problem here?" Kevin asked.

"Problem?!" cried Beetlejuice. "Problem?! No problem at all. Let's party! Free pizza for everyone!"

He ran behind the counter and opened the oven doors. The ghost flipped the pies as if they were Frisbees. Kids were screaming. Pepe fainted again.

"Beetlejuice!" yelled Lydia, rushing behind the counter. "Stop!"

"But we're all out of pie." The ghost grabbed a circle of dough and began tossing it up in the air. "Mama Mia, Pizza Pie!"

"Beetlejuice!"

The pie crust was growing bigger and bigger. Beetlejuice tossed it higher and higher.

Splat! The dough stuck to the ceiling. Beetlejuice and Lydia stared up, dumbstruck.

Then came a second splat as the dough fell and covered them both from head to foot.

Everyone in the restaurant was howling with glee. Lydia could hear them, but the sound was muffled by the dough. She flailed her arms. So did Beetlejuice. Finally they wrestled their way out of the pie, their faces and bodies dusted with flour. Beetlejuice grabbed the pie dough and yelled, "Sauce!"

"No! Enough!" cried Lydia. "Please stop!"

Beetlejuice picked up a huge metal vat of tomato sauce. Lydia tried to wrestle it out of his hands. She got the vat, but the sauce went flying. Up in the air. Then down. It splashed on top of their heads.

Screams of laughter surrounded her from all sides of the restaurant.

Some of the sauce hit Pepe, who was lying on the floor next to the oven. The sauce revived him. When he got back on his feet, the first thing he yelled was, "YOU'RE FIRED!"

He grabbed Beetlejuice and Lydia by the scruffs of their necks and threw them out the front door.

Lydia stumbled blindly through the mall. She had tomato sauce in her eyes.

Beetlejuice was laughing like crazy. He used his striped tongue like a towel and wiped his whole face clean. "Yum!"

Just then, Kevin Flick bounded out of Pepe's. "Lydia!" he shouted.

Except Lydia wasn't outside.

And neither was Pepe's strange new assistant.

"Lydia?" Kevin ran around the corner. No sign of her. He started in amazement. Where could she have gone?

At that instant, Lydia was barreling down to the Neitherworld at a million miles an hour in a special ghost car. She drove with one hand and with the other hand she was twisting Beetlejuice's ear. The ghost was howling.

"I'm warning you," she yelled. "This was the last straw!"

"*Owwww!!!*" answered Beetlejuice.

Seconds later, they were staring at each other across Beetlejuice's cobweb-filled kitchen. "Gee," cracked the ghost,"you're still red in the face."

Lydia wiped sauce off her face with her sleeve. "I asked you to leave me alone," she fumed.

"Well, you try spending a week in a vacuum cleaner," he pouted. "It dust isn't any fun. What a relief your stepmother finally emptied the thing."

"I wish she had emptied it down the disposal!"

"You don't mean that," Beetlejuice smiled sweetly. "And, if you want to be normal, you need my help."

"Your help? That's a laugh."

"No, it's not. This is." The ghost did a belly laugh. Then he spoke to a glass on the shelf. "Normal juice! Now!" he barked.

The glass had a face. It opened its eyes and said, "Sure." Then it squinched its eyes. Soon it was filling up with gray bubbling liquid.

"Drink it," the ghost commanded Lydia.

"No way," said Lydia.

"Oh, go on," coaxed the glass.

She took several big gulps. "Yuck!" She threw her hands up in the air. The gray liquid tasted like dust!

"AYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYY!!!!" the glass was yelling. It had slipped out of Lydia's hand and was flying across the room.

"I zee you are throwing your food again, Byetelzhooze!"

It was Jacques La Lean, Beetlejuice's French neighbor. He had caught the glass in his bony hand.

"Thanks," said the glass gratefully.

Lydia screamed. Her body had turned into a skeleton,too! A skeleton with a black ponytail. "I thought you said it would make me normal!"

"Zat is normal," said Jacques. "You look mahvelous."

The drink's effect wore off almost instantly. Her body came back. But she was still mad. "That does it!" wailed Lydia. " Beetlejuice, once and for all, I'm going to make sure you stay out of my hair!"

"You got it, Babes," said the ghost. He snapped his fingers. Now she was bald. She began to cry.

"Allow me," said Jacques with a bow. He was offering her his black beret.

"Thanks, but no thanks." She glared at Beetlejuice. "I'm going to lock you in your Roadhouse," she warned.

"Not a bad idea! At least that way we'd get to see him now and then!" The voice came from a blue painting hanging over the fireplace in the living room. Beetlejuice's portrait of his Aunt Lucy!

"We're right in his own home, and he never visits," agreed the green portrait of his Uncle Victor.

"Hey, Lydia," said the painting of Aunt Lucy. "You want to trap Beetlejuice down here? We can help!"

"Ha-ha!" cackled Beetlejuice. "That's enough of that, Aunt Lucy." He stretched his arm out thirty feet and reached all the way across the kitchen into the living room. He turned the picture of Aunt Lucy so she faced the wall. Then he let his hand snap back like a rubber band. It hit him in the face. "Ouch!"

Lydia's eyes were shining. "Say, what was that behind Aunt Lucy's portrait? A safe?"

Beetlejuice glanced at her suspiciously. "And what if it is?"

"Well, what have you got in there?"

"No way, Babe. You're not tricking me again."

"I just wanted to see what you've got in there. But I guess there's nothing in there at all."

"Nothing?" Beetlejuice strode across the room and took down Aunt Lucy.

"Now this is fun," mumbled the portrait.

Beetlejuice spun the safe's large dial. "Don't look," he ordered Lydia.

"What a miser," griped the painting of Uncle Victor.

The heavy metal door of the safe swung open. Stacked neatly inside were large, heavy bars of . . .

"Chocolate?!" gasped Lydia.

"The finest," boasted Beetlejuice. He pinched off a bite of the nearest bar. "I have to keep it in here or my vulture gobbles it all up and looks like a whale."

"Now I zee why you are such a fat slobbo," Jacques commented. "Why, zere's enough candy in zere to make a skeleton fat!"

"It's true," said Lydia. "But what's in back there?"

Beetlejuice peered into the safe. "Orange chocolate."

"Orange chocolate? There is no such thing."

"You've never had orange chocolate? Oh, Lyds, you've never lived." The ghoul was pulling out

chocolate bars with both hands. He threw them back over his shoulder. He climbed into the safe to reach the orange chocolate.

And that was when Lydia slammed the door.

The "Hey!" they heard was very faint. The safe's metal door must have been over a foot thick.

"Nice going, kid," complimented Uncle Victor.

"Now that's zafe-keeping, eh?" said Jacques.

"Keep an eye on him for me, would ya?" joked Lydia. "At least until the Halloween Ball."

"Deal," agreed Aunt Lucy. Lydia was gently hanging her back on the wall.

She said quick good-byes and ran out. But as she slammed the door to the Roadhouse, the skull and crossbones knocker clanged.

"Knock knock," it said. "Who's there? Hugh. Hugh who? Hugh still aren't normal!"

"Thanks a lot!" But she knew it was true. What she didn't know was what she was going to do about it.

Just then, a small black card fluttered slowly down past her eyes. She held out her hand and the card settled right into it.

"SAD?" read the silver letters on the card. "THEN COME SEE THE GREAT GARUMPH."

"The Great Garumph?" Lydia asked.

"YUP," read the card. "I'M A SHRINK AND A WIZARD."

"Hmm. How do I contact you?"

The card didn't have an answer. But as soon as Lydia asked the question the ground opened up.

She found herself falling through a long dark tunnel. She landed on a black leather sofa.

"Welcome," said a tiny but gravelly voice. "The Great Garumph, at your service."

Sitting across from her was a teeny man in a suit and tie. He was no bigger than Lydia's thumb. He had white hair and a large head. Large for his body, that is. Stuck to the top of his head were six tiny horns and a trumpet.

"Wow," said Lydia. "You're tiny." She blushed. "Sorry."

"Why should you be sorry? You just pointed out the obvious. If you hadn't, that would have shown you were polite. Politeness is a disease."

"It is?"

The little man stuck out his tongue. She laughed. "You see," he said. "Rudeness equals health."

"Who are you?" asked Lydia.

The man cleared his throat. "The Great Garumph, the greatest shrink in the Neitherworld. As you can see, I've shrunk myself almost to nothing."

"But I don't want to be shrunk."

"Humph! What do you want then?"

"I want to be normal."

"Normal?" The man looked shocked.

"Can you do that?"

"Well, yes. But I must tell you, it's my least favorite spell in the whole wide Neitherworld."

"Oh, please," Lydia said. "I really want it."

The Garumph sighed, then coughed, then garumphed. He flipped through the pages of a tiny book. "My spell book," he explained. "Oh dear."

"What's the matter? It's not there?"

"Oh, no, no, it's here all right. But there's a warning written beside it. It says it's a very strong spell. Once it's cast, it's very hard for a person to go back to being weird."

"That's fine with me."

The teeny man looked at her sadly. "There's another warning. There's only one way the spell can be broken. You have to dance at midnight with a man with three heads and a tongue that comes out of his middle forehead."

"Okay!"

The Garumph coughed and cleared his throat. Then he pulled a tiny wand out of his pocket. He waved it, studying the book.

"No more strange," he intoned. *"And no more mange."* He waved the wand. *"No more weird. Can't grow a beard. From now on, you'll be formal. From now on, you'll be . . ."* The Garumph hesitated.

"Say it," urged Lydia.

"Normal," the tiny man whispered in a teensy voice. "Very, very normal."

CHAPTER FIVE

THE WORLD'S MOST NORMAL GIRL

"PLEASE PASS THE SPINACH, MOTHER," Lydia said softly.

"What?!" Delia asked.

"Please pass the spinach."

Both her parents were silent.

"Are you sure you're feeling all right?" Charles asked. "No fever? Anything like that?"

"I'm feeling grand," said Lydia.

"Feeling what?" Delia asked.

"By the way, mother, this corned beef hash is simply scrumptious. What's in it?"

"If this is some way of making fun of me," Delia scowled, "I don't think it's funny."

"Oh, now, Lydia's not trying to make fun of you," said Charles. "Right, Lydia?"

"Absolutely not. I would never want to make fun of anyone. It's not nice."

The phone rang. Charles went into the front hall. "Just a sec," he told the caller. "Lydia, it's for you!"

"Mother," Lydia said. "Excuse me for a moment?"

"What?"

"Please excuse me from the table."

"You're excused! You're excused!" Delia ranted.

"Thank you."

Lydia placed her napkin next to her plate and left the room." I won't have her making fun of me this way," she heard Delia say.

"Hello?" she said into the receiver.

"Lydia? It's Kevin."

"Hello, Kevin," she said in a flat voice. It was important not to show too much enthusiasm.

"You okay?" Kevin asked.

"Yes, everything's fine. Why do you ask?"

"I don't know. You sound a little strange."

"Really? I'm sorry you think so."

"I looked for you outside of Pepe's today. I ran out after you, but I couldn't find you anywhere."

"Well, I'm sorry that we missed each other."

There was a puzzled silence at the other end. "You're mad at me, aren't you?" he asked.

"Mad at you? Heavens, no. Why would I be mad at you?"

He sighed. "All right, don't talk about it. I understand. That was awful what went on in there. I wanted to help, but it all happened so fast."

"Well, no harm done," Lydia told him in a chipper voice.

"Are you sure you're okay?"

"Yes. I'm fine. Why do you keep asking me that? This is getting insulting." She twirled the phone cord around her finger. "Say, this Friday is the Halloween Ball."

"Yeah, I know."

"Are you going?"

"Uh . . . I'm not sure."

He was about to ask her. She was sure of it. She crossed her fingers and waited.

And waited. And waited.

Kevin didn't say a word.

"Well," she said at last, "I'm afraid I must hang up. My dinner is getting cold." She hung up and smiled. "He's just a little shy," she told herself confidently.

That night, Delia and Charles tiptoed into Lydia's room. They stared down at their sleeping daughter.

She usually slept in a funeral shroud. Tonight she was wearing a pink nightie. She had her hair in curlers. She was hugging a teddy bear. The corners of her mouth were turned up in a smile.

"Do you think we should call a doctor?" Charles asked his wife.

Lydia smiled all night. She was having very sweet dreams. Going to the ball with Kevin. Being elected

queen. Graduating from high school with all A's. Marrying Kevin. Living in a perfect little house. She and Kevin kissing good-bye each morning. Not smooching, mind you. Just a polite little peck on the cheek. And then going off to their perfect jobs. Having 2.5 children. Ahhhhhhhhhhhh....

It would all start with him asking her to the ball.

He was just shy, she reminded herself in the morning. He'll ask me by Sunday.

On Sunday, he still hadn't asked her.

On Monday, she was actually beginning to get a little worried.

On Tuesday, she began to look anxious.

On Wednesday, she was desperately chewing on pencils.

By Thursday night, she was a basket case. The dance was tomorrow night. And she still didn't have a date. This wasn't normal. This wasn't normal at all.

All that night, she sat right by the phone. "Ring!" she pleaded. "Oh, please, ring! Ring!"

It did ring. But it was Priss.

"Did you hear?" she cooed. "Kevin Flick asked Amanda Olsen to the ball."

CHAPTER SIX

VCR? NO, VCU!

LYDIA DROPPED THE HALL PHONE WITH A BANG. As if in response, Beetlejuice banged on the wall of his Neitherworld safe.

BANG! BANG! BANG!

"Keep it down in there!" snarled Uncle Victor.

BANG! BANG! BANG!

"Did it ever occur to you," yelled Aunt Lucy, "that there are ancestors out here who are trying to sleep?"

But from inside the safe, Beetlejuice kept banging. He had turned his head into a hammer. Suddenly he stopped banging and clutched his head. "Oh, wow," he moaned. "Talk about hitting the nail on the head . . . I mean, the head on the nail! Aunt Lucy! Uncle Victor! Help! Help!"

"What do you want us to do?" said Uncle Victor, from outside the safe.

"Now you know how we feel," added Aunt Lucy. "Stuck on a wall all day."

Beetlejuice removed his head. He shaped the rest of his body into a cannon. He loaded in some dynamite, then his head." Three . . . two . . . one . . ." He fired his head at the door.

"OWWWWWWWWWWWWWW!!!!!"

The ghost and the two paintings all screamed at once.

He had given himself an incredible headache. He had knocked Aunt Lucy and Uncle Victor off the wall. But he hadn't harmed the safe. Not one bit.

The moment the cannon went off, there was an explosion in the real world as well. It sounded like an explosion, anyway. Actually, it was Lydia, wailing. Her parents came running.

"Kevin Flick is taking Amanda to the ball," moaned Lydia. She blew her nose loudly. "Now I don't have a date. And Priss's friends will all make fun of me. Even more . . ." — she let out a sob — " . . . than usual. If this is being normal, then I . . . I don't ever want to be normal again!"

"Now, now," said Delia, horrified.

Lydia covered her eyes with her hands. She trudged into the kitchen. "Oh, Beetlejuice," she moaned to herself. "Beetlejuice,Beetlejuice!"

Down in the Neitherworld, Beetlejuice howled in agony. Lydia's summons had sent him flying again. Right into the metal wall of the safe.

"Lydia? Sweetheart?" Charles began. "We're signed up to be chaperones. We'll be at the dance. How about going as my date?"

"I'd rather be dead," Lydia snapped.

Behind them, Delia's old black and white TV silently played the news. Delia liked to have the TV on while she cooked. The picture caught her eye.

"Look," she said. "Car crashes, fires, wars. There are plenty of worse things in the world than not having a date."

"Great," said Lydia. "I have something to look forward to."

No one noticed, but just then, the channel on the TV seemed to change all by itself. Now the picture showed Beetlejuice still locked in his own safe. He lay on a huge pile of chocolate. His arms were crossed. He looked furious. He tapped his green buck teeth with his fingers, deep in thought.

Delia snapped her fingers. "What about Uncle Booboo? He's single, and he only lives about twenty miles away."

Lydia pulled on her hair and shrieked like a cat.

"I guess not," said Delia.

On the TV, Beetlejuice suddenly had an idea. He

sat up so sharply he smashed his head on the roof of the safe. "*Ow!*" he cried. But with the volume off, he seemed to only mouth the word.

Suddenly he began devouring the bars of chocolate. He shoved them into his wide mouth with both hands.

"You'll just have to return my gown," Lydia sniffled.

"Why?" Charles asked, aghast.

Beetlejuice finished the last of the regular chocolate bars. Then he started on the even bigger pile of orange chocolate.

Lydia's eyes bulged. "Dad, you don't expect me to attend the Halloween Ball now . . . do you?"

"Honey," Charles said. "I—"

But Lydia was already gone. She raced out of the kitchen. Her bedroom door slammed. They heard the sounds of muffled crying followed by the sounds of Lydia trashing her room.

Both parents sighed in unison. Charles slumped into a chair. He stared right at the TV. But his eyes were glazed so he didn't notice the picture at all.

If he had, he would have seen Beetlejuice swelling up like a whale. And he kept shoving bars of orange chocolate into his mouth. He was puffing up so much that it was hard for him to move his hand. He struggled to squeeze one last orange bar into his mouth. His body now filled the whole screen. He could barely move his jaw to chew.

At last, he swallowed. And as soon as he did, he exploded.

As the door to the safe blasted open, Beetlejuice came flying out.

At the same moment, Lydia fell on her bed sobbing, "Beetlejuice, Beetlejuice, Beetlejuice."

If she had looked up, she would have seen the biggest ghost in the history of the world. Thanks to the chocolate, Beetlejuice had put on about 6,000 pounds.

But she kept her face in the pillow. He shook his finger at her. "Don't think I'm forgiving you for this," he scolded her silently, "because I'm not!"

He ran out the door. Or tried to. He was so wide that he smashed a huge hole in the wall. Lydia screamed.

But Beetlejuice was already on his way downstairs. Then he spotted Charles and Delia heading into their bedroom. They had the glummest looks on their faces.

"Hmm," thought Beetlejuice. "The Deetzes don't seem to be very happy." He scratched his huge fat head with a swollen fat finger. "Come to think of it, Lydia looked as if she had been crying. What gives here?"

The ghost squeezed his huge body into the den as gently as he could. He pointed a finger at the

VCR. The TV clicked on. "Rewind," instructed Beetlejuice. The VCR whirred.

The screen showed the Deetz family. They were all moving in fast motion. And they were moving backward. There was Lydia, running backward down the front steps to the kitchen.

"They shouldn't call it a VCR," cackled Beetlejuice. "They should call it a Vee Cee U!" He pointed his finger again. "Let's see vat vee cee . . . Play!" The Deetzes started moving forward.

Beetlejuice watched everything he had missed. When he saw Lydia get the news about Kevin, a tear rolled down his cheek.

Soon, however he was smiling again. He had a plan.

CHAPTER SEVEN

HAUNTING FOR A DATE

"AHHHHHHHHH!"

Mike Powers was admiring himself in the mirror. He had to admit it. Life was great. Here he was, the handsomest guy at Mr. Bannon's School for Boys. Certainly the most popular.

Not only was he captain of the football team. He was also going to the Halloween ball with the prettiest girl at Miss Shannon's School for Girls.

Yes, life sure was sweet. He flexed his biceps. This muscleman costume looked fantastic. Not too many guys had the body for it. He did. And wearing his football helmet on top of it. That was really a great touch.

He was so intently admiring himself that he didn't notice the curtains suddenly blow in.

That wouldn't have been so strange except for one thing. The windows themselves were tightly shut.

Mike's mother appeared in the doorway. "Can I see?"

"Sure. You can be the first to admire the King of the Ball."

She smiled proudly. Mike shivered. He felt a funny tingle, as if something had just raced through his body.

"Do you think you'll be home by eleven?" Mrs. Powers asked.

In response, her son threw back his head and cackled.

Mrs. Powers stared at him in amazement.

"Sorry," he said. "That just struck me as funny."

"I guess so, "Mrs. Powers responded with a frown. "Oh, Mike, before I forget. Since you're going to be borrowing the car, could you drop me somewhere?"

"You bet!" Mike screeched. He picked up his mother. "Where would you like to be dropped?" he asked.

"Have you lost your mind?" his mother cried.

Mike put her down and felt his helmet. "Nope. I think my mind is right in here." He howled with laughter as he raced out the door.

Priss held up her hand, admiring the perfect peach polish on her nails. "And then," she lied into the phone, "Kevin told Amanda that he wouldn't go out with you in a million years."

On the other end of the line, Lydia moaned. Priss continued her lie. "Then he said you're the weirdest dweeb he's ever met."

Lydia made choking sounds.

"And then he said he thinks you're ugly."

Lydia began bashing her head against the headboard.

"You see," said Priss. "I shouldn't have told you. I knew you'd take it personally."

Downstairs, the Westley's doorbell rang. "Priss!" her mother called.

"I gotta go," Priss confided. "But listen, do come tonight. I'll bet you'll have a blast. So what if you're the only person there without a date?"

Lydia didn't answer. Priss just hung up.

From downstairs came the sound of the loudest cackle Priss had ever heard. Her mother screamed.

"Mom?" Priss shouted. She ran down the steps. She almost tripped on her beautiful white gown. Then she heard her younger brother Billy laughing.

Mrs. Westley was laughing, too. "Oh, Mike," she said. "You startled me."

When she had first opened the door, Mike's head

had been huge, with green buck teeth. But when he turned around, he was himself again. That ghost face was just a mask.

"Sorry," Mike told her. "But I figured it's Halloween tomorrow and—"

"Oh, you don't apologize," Mrs. Westley laughed.

"Cool costume," said Billy. "I wasn't scared a bit."

"Mike!" Priss stood on the fourth step. She was a vision of loveliness and she knew it.

"Priss!" Mike gushed.

"C'mon, Billy," Mrs. Westley said with a smile. "Let's give them some privacy."

"Gross!" said Billy, following her out.

Priss smiled and batted her long lashes. "Well? What do you say?" She held out a shoe. She had spray-painted it silver. "Glass slippers," she told him. "Get it? Cinderella."

"Cinderella! How boring!" Mike made spitting sounds. "Why, that's the stupidest costume I've ever seen in my life!"

Priss didn't even blink. "Mike Powers. You know I don't like that kind of joke." Priss looked down at the ground. "Well . . . you can kiss me now."

"Hot Diggity!" yelled Mike. He grabbed Priss and kissed her cheek. It was probably the loudest smacker in history. In fact, Priss felt as if he almost kissed her cheek right off.

She slapped him. Then she burst into tears and fled back to her room. Mike raced after her but Priss had locked her door. Mike went in through the keyhole. When Priss looked up, he was standing right beside her. She screamed in shock.

"Priss, my darling? I've come to say good-bye."

"What do you mean?"

"You don't know what 'good-bye' means? It means—" He waved both his hands bye-bye. Then he shrieked with laughter.

"Mike Powers, I don't think this is funny for an instant." He kept laughing. "I'm serious! Cut it out."

"You got it, Babes," said Mike. And suddenly he had found a pair of scissors. And he was cutting up everything in sight. He cut out a huge piece of her wallpaper.

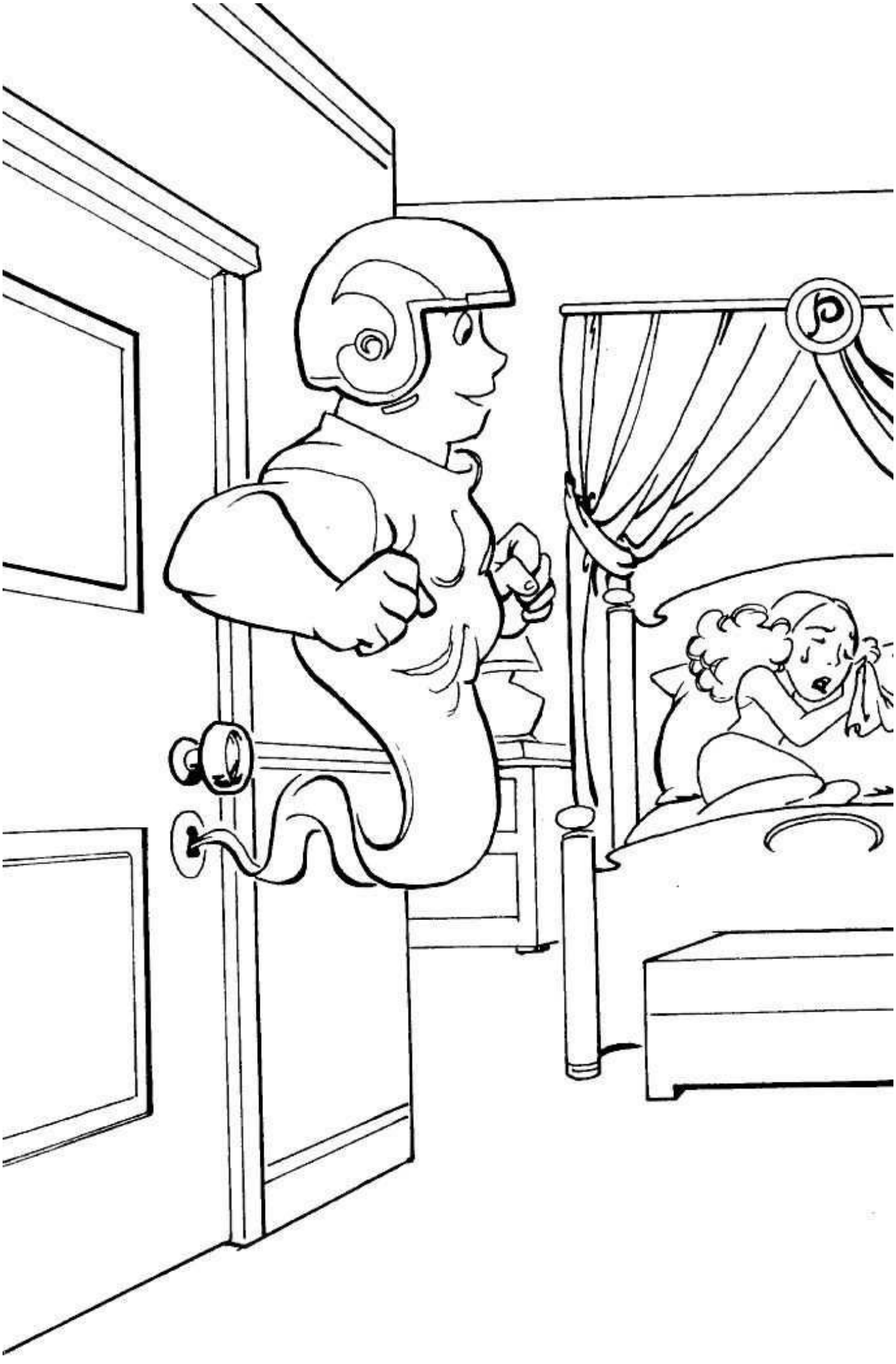
"Oh! Oh! My wall!"

"Sorry." He tossed the scissors aside. They sailed through her window with a crash.

"MIKE! What's gotten into you?"

"Good . . . question!" he mumbled through a mouthful of something.

"What . . . has . . . gotten . . . into . . . me?" He stuck his hand into his mouth and plucked out a squawking chicken. "Puh! Puh!" He spat out a cloud of yellow feathers. Priss backed away in terror. "Don't worry, I won't let him get away," Mike promised her. "Whoops. He got away."



The chicken chased Priss around the room. Then it raced out the door.

"Get out! Get out!" Priss screeched.

"You don't want to be my date anymore?" Mike asked.

"Not if you dragged me by my tongue through the desert!"

"Really? Let's see!" Mike reached a long arm toward her mouth, but she backed away. She backed away so fast she tripped over her bed.

Downstairs, Priss's mother began to yelp. "It's a chicken! It's a chicken!"

"I was going to take someone else anyway," Mike said. "You don't want to know who, by any chance?"

Priss gave her blond hair a proud toss. But she couldn't keep from asking. "Who?"

"The Queen of the Ball. The most beautiful of them all."

Priss broke into a broad grin. "Oh, Mike, I knew it. You were kidding all along. You're taking me!"

"Wrong again. I'm taking Lydia Deetz. If she'll have me."

With that, Mike opened the door and rushed out. At least, that was the plan. What actually happened was he rushed into Priss's closet. There was a terrible crash followed by the sound of someone wrestling with wire hangers. Mike came out covered in dresses.

"Whew!" he said through the dresses. "That was a clothes call!" He staggered around the room. "Hey! Who turned off the lights!" He knocked over a lamp, a bookcase, the fish bowl, the TV, and the stereo.

"GET OUUUTTTTTTTTTTT!!!!" shouted Priss. She shoved him toward the door.

"Okay, okay, no need to get pushy."

With three dresses on his head, it was hard for him to see. But he made it out the door. Then he fell down the steps.

"Ha!" shouted Priss triumphantly. "Ha! Ha!"

But the moment Mike had left the house, she burst into tears. She didn't cry for long. She couldn't afford to.

She needed the time to plan her revenge.

CHAPTER EIGHT

BUG ROBBERS

"IS LYDIA HOME?"

Mrs. Deetz stared at the handsome teen in the muscleman costume. His muscles looked real!

"Who?" she asked finally.

"Lydia Deetz?"

"Oh, yes," Mrs. Deetz said. "That's my daughter. Her name must have slipped my mind for a moment!"

Mrs. Deetz went upstairs and knocked on Lydia's door. She returned shortly. "I'm sorry," she told the youth. "She says she won't see anyone."

"Ah." The muscleman twiddled his thumbs for a moment. "I don't have a date for tonight's dance, and—"

"First door at the top of the stairs," interrupted Delia.

Lydia's door looked new. So did the plaster all

around it. The first time Mike knocked, there was no answer. So he knocked harder and the whole door fell down.

"Sorry about that," he said.

Lydia gaped. Tears covered her face. "Mike!"

"I was wondering if you'd be my date tonight."

"But you're Priss's date. . . ." A funny look came over her face. "Is this some kind of a joke?"

"A joke? You don't know what a joke is? A joke is like . . . 'What's the most common illness among ghosts? Coffin!'" He laughed so hard he started to cough himself. A bunch of flies flew out of his mouth. He quickly shooed them away.

But Lydia had seen. "That's a funny laugh you've got there," she said, moving closer.

"Oh? Why do you say that? Ha-ha! I mean, I wouldn't insult your laugh."

Lydia pinched Mike's bulging bicep. It was rock hard. "You look awfully strong. But I bet you can't lift this whole house."

Mike cackled some more. "Lift the house? Piece of cake." He opened the window, hooked his fingers around the ledge, and yanked. The room tipped to the side. Lydia's furniture slid toward the door.

"Beetlejuice!" cried Lydia.

Mike let the house fall down with a crash. "Huh?"

"What are you doing in Mike's body?"

Downstairs, Lydia could hear her parents scream-

ing. Charles stuck his head through the open doorway. He was wearing his chaperone outfit. "We just had an earthquake," he told them breathlessly. "Oh, no! The earthquake knocked the door off again!"

"Mike has asked me to go to the ball," Lydia told her father.

Charles looked amazed. "Really?"

The muscleman stuck out his hand. "Beetleju—I mean, Mike!"

Charles shook his hand. There was the sound of fingers crunching. "AYYY!" Charles cried. He rubbed his hand. "This is fantastic news, pumpkin," he told Lydia.

"Isn't it?" said Lydia. "But there's just one thing."

"What?" asked Mike and Charles together.

"I'm not going."

"What? But you've talked about the dance for weeks," begged Delia. She was listening from the doorway.

"No way," Lydia said firmly. "Not in a million years."

"A million years?" said Mike. "But the dance will be over by then!"

"But why?" asked Charles. "Why won't you go?"

"Because . . . because he's asking me at the last minute! No normal girl would put up with this."

Mike grinned. "But I'm not asking you at the last minute," he said. "Didn't you get my letter?"

Lydia spun around to glare at him. "What letter?"

"I mailed it weeks ago. Mr. Deetz, you didn't forget to give Lydia a blue envelope. Did you?"

"Why . . . no . . ." said Mr. Deetz, looking worried. But Mike reached over and pulled a little blue envelope out of Charles' pocket. "So you see," Mike told Lydia. "I'm not asking you at the last minute. Now you've got to go."

Lydia glowered. "Of all the dirty tricks."

"Tricks?" Mike said. "You want to see tricks?"

He snapped his fingers and a bouquet of roses appeared. "For the lady," he said. "And now, my incredible floating house trick." He raised his fingers but Lydia grabbed his hand.

"Never mind that," she said grimly. "Let's go."

At that same moment, at Mr. Bannon's School for Boys, five flashlights beamed through a dark room.

"Here we go," said a boy's voice. "Ants."

"Termites," said the second boy.

"Caterpillars," said the third boy.

"Leeches," squealed a fourth boy.

The boys were in the school's biology lab. They were busy stuffing their pockets. "I wonder why your sister wants this stuff," said one of the boys.

"I don't know," answered Billy. "But Priss said we'd all get a reward."

"Cool! What's left on the list?"

"Dead frogs."

CHAPTER NINE

CRASHING THE PARTY

"HEY, LYDS," yelled Mike. "How fast can this car go?"

"Ninety is the limit," said Lydia, "but don't—"

"Gas again," Mike wheezed. He floored the car.

Lydia was sitting next to Mike in the front seat. Mr. and Mrs. Deetz sat in the back. "Don't worry, I'll get us there on time!" Mike called back to them. But they couldn't hear a word he said. He had the radio blasting too loudly. Mr. and Mrs. Deetz exchanged a look of terror.

"Oh, Mike," called Delia, "I think we could go a little slower."

But he couldn't hear her either. And he was about to hit a tree. He lifted the car right over it.

He gave Lydia a grin. "Gee, Lyds, this is fun, huh?"

"No," Lydia said. "It's a nightmare. And you're making it worse."

"C'mon, Babe, I'm saving you," he insisted.

Lydia counted to ten. Then she said, "Just promise me one thing."

"Anything, Babe."

"Act normal. At the dance. Okay? I mean it."

"And if I don't?"

"If you don't, I'll kill you."

"You got it, Babe."

"Normal," he told himself, as if trying to memorize the word. "Normal."

In the gym, the Halloween dance was going smoothly. "I think," said Miss Shannon, "that this is the best Halloween Ball we've ever had."

"Absolutely," agreed one of the chaperones.

"And," sighed Miss Shannon, "the decorations committee has simply outdone themselves!"

"Gorgeous! Stunning! Delightful!" agreed three of the parents who had come to chaperone.

Spider webs of orange and black streamers hung all over the room. Paper ghouls and goblins danced on every wall. Jack-o-lanterns lit up each table.

On stage, Mr. Jolly's Swing Band was playing all of Miss Shannon's old favorites. And on the dance floor, two chaperones were slow-dancing. At the tables sat hundreds of young ghosts, goblins, elves, and monsters. The students all looked miserable.

"Of course, the kids aren't dancing," said Miss Shannon. "But at least they're quiet!"

Just then, the gym doors opened. In walked the biggest muscleman Miss Shannon had ever seen. He was followed by Lydia and her parents.

"IT'S SHOWTIME!" yelled the muscleman. "LETTTTTTT'S BOOGIE!"

Lydia was covering her eyes. Mike swept her off her feet. Literally. He waltzed her around the floor in wide circles.

"Please put me down," Lydia hissed. "You're making me seasick!"

"You wanna see sick?" Mike tucked his head down and made barfing sounds.

"No! Stop!"

"Relax," he told her. "I'm a great dancer." He tossed her through his legs and caught her with one hand.

By now, all the kids had stood up to watch them dance. "C'mon," yelled Mike. "Join us!"

He ran over to a short robot standing nearby. He pulled the robot onto the dance floor. Then he grabbed a gremlin. In no time at all, the dance floor was filled with young monsters.

"Sorry we were late," Charles was telling Miss Shannon. "I don't wear my tux too often. I couldn't find my cuff links."

"Well," Miss Shannon said, "I'm just glad you're here. I think we're going to have to watch Mike Powers closely tonight."

"Oh," Delia said, "he'll be the life of the party."

Just then, Lydia went flying up into the air. She was screaming. Mike caught her and spun her around. "That boy sure can jitterbug," Delia added with a nervous smile.

Mr. Jolly's band finished playing "O My Little Sweetsums." Mr. Jolly cleared his throat and raised his baton. The band now launched into "Pookie Dookie Doo."

"It's been so long . . ." sang Mr. Jolly.

"Spin so long?" Mike wondered aloud. "Okay!"

Mike began to spin Lydia in circles.

"Stop!" she yelled. "I'm going to be sick!"

He let her go. But she spun around again and again. As her hands came around she slapped kid after kid in the face.

The students began to drift back to their tables.

"Hey!" yelled Mike. "What's the matter with you? What are you? A bunch of party poopers?"

"We can't dance to this stuff," explained a skeleton.

"It's the pits," agreed a witch.

Mike scratched his head. "I can fix that," he promised. He bounced onto the stage. He pulled sheets of music from his pocket. He swapped his music with the music on the musicians' stands.

"This music brings back such memories," Miss

Shannon was telling Charles. "It's so, romantic."

The band lurched into heavy metal.

Miss Shannon fainted dead away.

"All right!" cried the students.

Soon the floor was rocking with monsters.

Mike waded through the dancing crowd. "Lyds!" he called. "Let's get down!"

Lydia tried to run. But Mike grabbed her hand. "Watch this!"

He bounced up and down in time to the music. He went about ten feet up in the air.

"MIKE!" Lydia screamed. "You promised!" She looked like she was about to cry.

But by now, all heads had turned to watch Mike. The crowd began to clap in rhythm. "Where did you learn to dance like that?" one kid yelled.

"Are you kidding?" Mike said. "That was nothing."

He began to spin in a circle. His head spun, too, but in the opposite direction. The crowd went nuts. "And now," he said, "for some rock-and-roll!"

He jumped up and down so hard the whole room rocked. The paper decorations sailed down onto their heads. Mike tucked himself up into a tight little ball and rolled across the room at lightning speed. Students scurried for cover. He crashed into the coat rack. Coats flew up in the air and stuck to the walls where the decorations had been. "Strike!"

cried Mike. He rubbed his head and added, "Ow."

Off to the side, Charles and Delia were busy reviving Miss Shannon. "You see," Delia told her. "Everything's under control." Miss Shannon opened her eyes. She saw Mike back in the middle of the dance floor. His head was spinning again. Her head spun too, only slower. She fainted again.

"MIKE!!!!" screeched Lydia.

Mike stopped spinning. "What?"

Lydia didn't answer. She turned and stormed off. Mike followed her. "C'mon, Lyds. What's the matter? I won't do it again. I promise! Lyds!"

But Lydia kept going straight through doors.

But right before she reached them, they opened from the other side. In poured a stream of ghouls, ghosts, and goblins. Lydia stared in horror. "Mike," she whispered. "Do you see what I see?"

The monsters moved right onto the dance floor. They started to dance.

"Uh-oh," Mike told her.

"They're real, aren't they?"

"Hmm. I guess I shouldn't have mentioned this party down in the Neitherworld."

Lydia fainted dead away.

CHAPTER TEN

THREE HEADS ARE BETTER THAN ONE

PRISS HAD TO ADMIT IT. She was having a great time. It was probably the best party she'd ever been to. As usual, guy after guy kept asking her to dance.

First she danced with a dragon. She stopped when real fire came out his mouth. It scorched the hem of her gown. "I wonder how he rigged that?" she thought. "Amazing costume!"

Next she danced with a furry creature with six eyes. Then a skeleton with a beret and a French accent. He said his name was Jacques La Lean. "Dancing is zuch great exerzise, no?" he asked.

Then she danced with this huge gruff guy who said he was dressed as The Monster Across the Street. He made her dance with his friend, too. A little dog who said his name was Poopsie.

"I lead! I lead!" the Monster kept growling.

Then she danced with a green thing that seemed to be made of Jell-O. When he giggled his whole body jiggled and wobbled.

Yes, she was having a great time. There was only one thing wrong. Mike and Lydia. Priss couldn't enjoy herself completely. Not while she knew that he was here with her. It was time to begin her plan.

"Excuse me," she told her dance partner, who was dressed up as a pair of legs with a mouth on each knee. "I'll be right back."

"Grhmpwdhwsh," her dancer partner told her happily.

Priss waded through a sea of dancing monsters. "Amanda!"

Amanda was dancing with a six-foot-tall cockroach. She excused herself when she saw Priss.

"Wow," Amanda told her. "Whoever that guy was, he sure can wiggle. I can't find Kevin. I thought you said he was going to be my date."

"He will," promised Priss. "I'll introduce you guys just as soon as he shows up. But right now, it's time to start our secret plan. Spread the word."

Amanda told Jill. Jill told Stacey. Then they began.

They started tripping Lydia.

Whenever Lydia danced by, one of Priss's friends stuck her foot out. And tripped her so she fell.

But then a strange thing happened.

All the creatures started tripping and falling as well. It was as if Lydia had started some new, hip kind of dance.

"All together!" shouted Mike.

All the monsters tripped at once. They leapt to their feet. And tripped again.

Next the girls tried bugs.

They all ran up to Lydia. They took out the slimy bugs and dead frogs the boys had collected from their biology lab. They dumped them all right down Lydia's dress. Lydia screamed.

This trick seemed to work a lot better. All the kids near Lydia stopped dancing and stared in horror. They pointed at her and squealed.

But then another strange thing happened. A bunch of kids dressed like monsters gathered around Lydia. They made these strange slurping noises. And the next thing Priss knew, all the bugs were gone.

"EGGS!" screeched Priss.

She and her friends raced for the kitchen. When they came back, they were armed with two rotten eggs in each hand.

Yet another strange thing happened.

The rotten eggs exploded. The gooey stinky stuff covered their dresses. Priss and her friends stank to the high heavens!

The music stopped. Everyone was staring. "It's them!" someone cried. "The smell's coming from them!"

Now the chaperones had Priss and the girls by their collars. They were all being led out of the dance. And Mike was laughing. "Party hearty, dudes!" he yelled. And everyone went back to dancing.

Everyone except Miss Shannon, that is. She made her way to the bandstand. She was yelling at Mr. Jolly. "You're supposed to play the 'Floogie Boogie'!"

But Mr. Jolly couldn't hear her. He couldn't hear a thing. The amps Mike had given the band were ear-splitting.

"Here you are," Delia told her stepdaughter. "This is some dance, isn't it?"

"No, it is not. I have never sunk so low in my entire life," Lydia told her. And she hurried away.

Charles was helping to bring out the refreshments. "Okay," he told a huge bowling ball with eyes. "Don't worry. There's plenty of food for everyone."

The bowling ball opened a wide toothless mouth. It rolled right over the food table. There was a loud sound of slurping and sucking and gnashing. All the food was gone.

"You!" Miss Shannon was trying to pull Mike off the dance floor. "This is all your fault!"

"Thanks!" replied Mike. He grabbed the headmistress's hands. "Shall we dance?" He shook her arms. The headmistress's entire body began to shake to the wild rhythm.

A cheer went up from the crowd. Students gathered round in a circle. Everyone clapped as Mike and the headmistress danced.

Lydia headed for the exit. It was almost midnight. She couldn't bear a minute more. But once again the doors opened before she got there.

There stood a man with three heads. "Wanna dance?" said the center head.

"No, I most certainly do not!" said Lydia.

She tried to get past him. But he took her hand and held it.

"Well, I do," the first head said. "So do I," said the second head. "It's three to one," added the third head. "You've been out-voted."

He carried her, kicking and screaming, out onto the dance floor.

"You don't understand," Lydia told the monster. "I've got to get home. It's almost midnight."

"So?" said the man with three heads. "What happens to you at midnight? You turn into a pumpkin?"

With that, he twirled her around.

"Hey, everyone!" yelled Mike. "Look at the time! It's the witching hour!"

The crowd all looked up at the huge clock on the gym's scoreboard. They counted down to midnight. "Three! Two! One!"

When the second hand hit the twelve, two things happened at once. A huge cheer went up. And the man with three heads did something really weird.

A long pink tongue came curling out of his middle forehead.

The tongue licked Lydia right on the nose.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

BEETLEJUICE BLASTS OFF

LYDIA RAISED A HAND TO SLAP, but she couldn't decide which head to slap.

And then a funny thing happened.

She laughed. "Slapping a guy with three heads! This is so . . ." she giggled.

"Weird?" asked the first head.

"Far out?" asked the second.

"Eerie?" asked the third.

"Cool!" answered Lydia. "This is so cool!"

Cool? Suddenly it dawned on her. She had just danced with a man with three heads. At midnight. And a tongue had come out of his center forehead. The Great Garumph's spell! It was broken!

Now she would never be normal!

She felt terrible. Then she looked around the room. Surely this was the wildest party in the

history of Peaceful Pines. And it was all her fault. She felt wonderful!

"Hey, Lyds!" It was Mike. He was dancing all by himself. "Some party, huh?"

"The greatest!" laughed Lydia. Mike beamed.

"Say, Mike, why are you dancing by yourself?" she asked him.

"By myself?" He looked surprised. "I'm not. My partner's invisible. Say hello, Sylvia."

"Helloooo," cooed a deep voice.

Lydia roared with delight.

She saw Charles and Delia waving at her. "Don't go away," she told the monster with three heads.

"We'll be waiting," all three heads said at once.

"What's the problem?" Lydia asked her parents.

"Well," Charles began. "No problem really. It's just that Miss Shannon said we were supposed to make sure this dance ended by eleven."

"And—" Delia nodded toward the dance floor.

Miss Shannon was locked in an embrace with a purple octopus. They were dancing wildly.

Lydia giggled into her fist.

"We haven't even had the voting for Queen of the Ball," Mrs. Deetz reminded her.

"I guess you'd better remind her," Lydia said.

Just then, a bloody hand tapped her shoulder.

"Can . . . I . . . have . . . this . . . dance?" asked a dead

man with a sword running through his stomach.

"Excuse me," Lydia told her parents. She skipped off holding the dead man's hand.

In the middle of the floor, Ginger the spider was tap-dancing in a happy frenzy that sounded like machine-gun fire.

As she danced, Lydia glanced at the far wall. Two paintings were moving in time to the music. Aunt Lucy and Uncle Victor! The portraits waved.

Then The Monster Across the Street began doing the stomp. He stomped up and down, right in the middle of the dance floor. He stomped so hard that three lights fell. Poopsie pointed upward and howled. The Monster looked up with his mouth open wide. He swallowed the lights whole.

A cheer went up as the room was plunged into semi-darkness. Everyone danced harder.

Mike danced over to Lydia again. "Lyds! Watch me do some more spins!"

He began to spin his head round and round. Faster and faster.

Lydia applauded. So did everyone dancing nearby.

This time, Mike spun even faster. And faster. Now his whole body was spinning.

And then his body began to sink. He was drilling a hole right through the floor!

"MIKE!" yelled Lydia. "CAREFUL!"

But he couldn't stop. She reached out to grab his football helmet. But it came off in her hand. And Mike disappeared into the hole in the ground!

A voice boomed out over the microphone. "Can I have your attention, please?"

It was Miss Shannon. She was still swaying and dancing. "It's time for the election, my little darlings. We're going to vote for best costume. And for Queen of the Ball! Our two nominees for Queen are Priscilla Westley and Lydia Deetz. Here are the ballots. And remember, only one vote per person."

She looked down. Right under the stage stood a monster. It was half lion, half gym coach. It blew its whistle. "VOTE FOR LYDIA!" the monster roared.

From all over the auditorium there came a shout. Monsters, ghouls, and goblins rushed toward Miss Shannon. She screamed. She threw the huge stack of ballots up in the air.

The white papers fluttered slowly onto the dance floor. The purple octopus grabbed ten sheets. "Lydia, Lydia, Lydia," he began writing with each arm.

Lydia knelt down on the floor. She put her mouth to the hole and called, "Mike?"

From very far away, she heard a faint drilling sound. "Lydia?" came the even fainter reply.

"Yes?!"

"Help!"

What could she do? Just then, she heard a crash. She put her eye to the hole. At the far end, she could now see a light. Then the light went away.

Someone was looking up at her from the other end of the hole. She looked more closely. The girl at the other end of the hole was Chinese! Beetlejuice had drilled a hole through the Earth to China!

Lydia got to her feet. She raced out of the gym. "Wait! Wait! Wait!"said a voice behind her. It was the man with three heads.

But she didn't wait. She ran out of the school.

It was chilly outside. Monsters were dancing on top of the cars. She kept running. She didn't stop until she was standing in the middle of the playing field. She looked up at the stars.

Whoosh! A tiny shooting star shot by. The faintest of voices floated down to her. "L . . . y . . . d . . . i . . . a! H . . . e . . . l . . . p!"

Just as she feared! Beetlejuice hadn't stopped in China. He had blasted into outer space!

Whoosh! He went by again. He was orbiting around the Earth!

Meanwhile, Miss Shannon and the chaperones had finished adding up the votes. "Well," she said into the microphone. "We have our winners. Best costume goes to . . ." She peered at the paper. "Grxldra?"

MISS SHANNON'S
SCHOOL
FOR
GIRLS

A cheer went up from the crowd.

Up walked a girl in a pink gown. She looked just like any normal kid in Peaceful Pines. "Why would anyone vote for her for best costume?" wondered Miss Shannon.

"Flixl swedreff awfrixxy," Grxldra told the crowd shyly. She kissed her trophy. Then she ate it.

More wild cheering.

"Okay," Miss Shannon said shakily. "And now, the moment we've all been waiting for." She took out a crown and scepter. "It's time to crown our new Queen of the Ball." She glanced at her notes. "Let's see. Priss got 838 votes." A small cheer went up. "And Lydia got 3,000 votes."

The cheering became a roar. But the applause stopped suddenly. A horrible odor had taken over the room. The smell of rotten eggs.

"This vote is a fraud!" cried Priss. She was standing at the front door. Her parents were trying to hold her back.

"No, no," Miss Shannon assured her from the stage. She was still shimmying slightly. "We counted very carefully. Lydia is the new queen."

Priss stared at the crowd with hatred. "Well," she said. "Go ahead and crown her then. See if I care."

"Yes," Miss Shannon said. "Lydia? Could you come up here please?"

Everyone waited. The monsters began to look around. No Lydia.

Priss's fury began to ease. She even started to smile. "Well," she said, "if she's not here, I guess the prize goes to the runner-up."

Lydia was still outside in the cold. She watched Beetlejuice make his 300th orbit around the Earth. She still didn't know how to bring him back down.

"Oh, Beetlejuice," she moaned. "Looks like you're a goner."

Looks? That word made her think of something. But what?

Looks. You check your looks in a ....

Mirror.

And the mirror was how Beetlejuice visited her!

She fumbled in her purse. Lucky thing she had been normal for a while. Otherwise she would never have been caught dead with a purse. And she never would have had a make-up mirror.

She flicked the tiny mirror open. And saw ... her own face.

"Oh," she said sadly. "Beetlejuice, Beetlejuice, Beetlejuice." She clicked the mirror shut.

"Ow!" said a familiar voice.

She opened the mirror again. There was Beetlejuice's reflection staring back at her! He was sitting on the Moon!

"Beetlejuice!" she cried.

"Hi, Babe. Thanks for stopping my orbit."

"I did that?"

"You bet. Now maybe you can bring me home?"

"Oh, yeah! BEETLEJUICE! BEETLEJUICE! BEETLEJUICE!"

Inside the gym, the ghouls and goblins were grumbling. Priss was making her way toward the stage. "I'm the queen," she kept saying. "Bow down to your queen."

Except she didn't look where she was going. And she stepped into the hole Beetlejuice drilled.

Luckily, Priss's hoop skirt was very wide. She didn't fall all the way. But she got stuck so that just her head was sticking out. "Hey!" she screamed.

But her voice was drowned out by the crowd which screamed and cheered when Lydia walked into the gym. "Hip hip hooray!" yelled the monsters. "Hail to the Queen!" played Mr. Jolly's band.

And Lydia just laughed and laughed.

She was still laughing an hour later. Her parents were sitting in the car, waiting to go home. "Just a second," Lydia told them. "I want to say good-bye to someone." They smiled at her faintly. They seemed to be in a daze.

She walked over to a nearby tree. Leaning against it was Beetlejuice. He was back in his usual body.

"Pretty good basheroo, huh?" He chuckled.

"The best," she agreed. "Thanks to you. By the way, what did you do with Mike?"

The ghoul pointed across the parking lot. Priss was striding angrily away from the school. Mike was following behind her.

"What can I say?" Mike kept saying. "I'm sorry! I'm sorry! I'm sorry! I wasn't myself!"

Beetlejuice whistled. "I'll say he wasn't!"

Lydia howled so hard she didn't notice the monster running toward her.

"Lydia!" the monster called. It was the man with three heads.

Only he was removing two of them.

And inside the third head was . . .

Kevin.

"Oh, wow," Lydia said. "How did you . . .?"

He shrugged. "Easy. I bought two ventriloquist dummies and just used their heads. Rigging this tongue was the hard part." He peeled his special tongue contraption off his forehead.

"What a cool costume," Lydia raved.

"Not as cool as this guy's here," Kevin said. He held out his hand to Beetlejuice. "I'm Kevin Flick."

"Fred Mertz," Beetlejuice told him.

Kevin looked down at the ground. "Listen, Lydia. I want to explain why I didn't ask you to the dance."

"Oh?" She tried to act casual.

"See, you were acting kind of strange this week. Kind of—"

"Normal?" Lydia asked with a smile.

Kevin grinned with relief. "Yeah. Normal. That's a good word for it. And if there's one thing I hate more than anything else, it's people who are too normal. Hey, that's why I broke up with Priss."

"It is?" Lydia gasped.

"Yeah. Anyway, I thought you were really out there, you know? That's what I liked about you. So I decided not to go to the ball at all."

"Not go?! But I thought you asked Amanda Olsen!"

"No way. Who told you that?" He answered his own question. "Priss!" He made a face. "I only came to see how you were doing."

Beetlejuice's eyes were gleaming. "Ya hear that, Lyds?" He slapped her on the back. "What did I tell you?" Then he clapped his hand on Kevin's shoulder. "Ya like weird, Pal? I'll show ya weird!"

"BEETLEJUICE!" Lydia cried. "NO!"

But it was too late. Beetlejuice had whistled for his tiny ghost car. He yanked Kevin inside. He was driving straight down to the Neitherworld!

Lydia whistled as well. She jumped into a ghost car of her own. She floored it.

The race was on!

BOOGIE-MAN

The biggest party of the year is coming up and Lydia doesn't have a date. Then Beetlejuice has a great plan. He'll haunt the captain of the football team and go as Lydia's scream date!

At the party, Beetlejuice's dancing really makes heads spin, especially his own. But Lydia realizes she'd better come to the rescue when his fancy footwork starts catching up to him — and Beetlejuice is scared by his own shadow!

BEETLEJUICE

THE COOLEST GHOUL IN

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